

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1667

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Brief Description: Regarding fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Sponsors: By Representatives Green, Cody, Morrell, Ormsby, Moeller and Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/14/07, 2/27/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/14/07, 71-24.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/11/07, 45-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Establishes a \$1.50 surcharge on all health care provider credentials to reduce the fees of professions with credentialing fees over \$500.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Barlow, Campbell, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Condotta and Curtis.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Secretary of Health (Secretary) and the various health profession boards and commissions regulate the 57 health professions and 45 types of health care facilities and services. The Secretary is responsible for establishing fees for all of these regulated entities. Fees must be established according to the amount necessary to defray the costs of administering the

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program. Fees may be waived by the Secretary when it is determined that it is not in the best interest of public health and safety.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

In addition to fees required for a health care provider credential, a \$1.50 annual surcharge is placed upon all health care provider credentials issued after January 1, 2008. Money received from the surcharge shall be used to reduce the fees for members of any profession that has an annual credentialing fee above \$500. The surcharge expires on July 1, 2011.

The Department of Health (Department) must review the effectiveness of the surcharge in eliminating inequities between professions in the amounts of credentialing fees. The Department must submit the report to the Legislature by November 15, 2010.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment eliminates the \$1.50 surcharge for health professions licenses and requires that the Department of Health submit to the Legislature an evaluation of the economic benefits of maintaining a midwifery regulatory program. The Department shall contract with a consultant to review the benefits of subsidizing midwife licenses including the economic benefits to consumers of having out-of-hospital births and the reasons for the high cost of licensing midwives. The report may also examine the effectiveness of using a surcharge to promote equity in licensing fees for various health professions. The report is due by January 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill gives the Department the ability to collect funds in fewer subaccounts of the Health Professions Account. The number of midwives has significantly decreased as their fees have increased. This bill will preserve affordable access to childbirth care. This bill has the potential to fix the health professions fee system. This bill more evenly distributes the burden of funding the credentialing and disciplinary work of the Department.

(With concerns) The current system of having each profession pay for the cost of their regulation is the most appropriate method for determining fees.

(Opposed) This bill does not say how the money collected will be distributed among the professions. National organizations have endorsed the current professional fee system that Washington uses.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Green, prime sponsor; Nick Federici and Audrey Levine, Midwives Association of Washington; Erin Greenlee; and Carolee Hall.

(With concerns) Joan Garner, Washington State Nurses Association.

(Opposed) Tim Layton, Washington State Medical Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.